

HOUSE No. 1682

By Mr. Swan of Springfield, petition of Benjamin Swan and others for legislation to authorize the acquisition of land for the development and construction of an underground railroad, and a civil rights and black heritage museum in the city of Springfield. Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PETITION OF:

Benjamin Swan	Christine E. Canavan
Stephen P. Buoniconti	Gloria L. Fox
Shirley Owens-Hicks	

In the Year Two Thousand and Five.

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE ACQUISITION OF LAND, THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF AN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, CIVIL RIGHTS AND BLACK HERITAGE MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER IN SPRINGFIELD.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. It is hereby found and declared that presently
2 within Western Massachusetts there exists the need for a museum
3 and cultural center with twelve thousand square feet of space to be
4 used as a center to educate the public and serve as a resource
5 center for schools, colleges and public and private agencies and
6 organizations, and individuals regarding the historical significance
7 of this part of the Commonwealth to the success of the Under-
8 ground Railroad, Civil Rights Movement in America and the role
9 of African Americans in development of the Western Massachu-
10 setts region.

11 It is hereby further found and declared that the construction and
12 development of such center is needed in order to further enhance
13 regional tourism, attract conferences and conventions, and large
14 gatherings to Springfield, thereby generating an influx of people
15 from outside the Commonwealth who would utilize the tourist
16 facilities and related businesses in every region of the Common-
17 wealth.

18 It is hereby further found and declared that the construction and
19 development of such a center in the city of Springfield will serve
20 as a catharsis important to alleviate some of the lingering negative
21 effects of the institution of slavery and the discrimination prac-
22 ticed against African Americans, which had state and federal gov-
23 ernmental statutory sanction.

1 SECTION 2. For the planning, financing, development, and
2 construction of the new center in the Commonwealth, the sum of
3 \$12 million dollars is hereby made available, for the purpose and
4 subject to the provisions of law regulating the disbursements of
5 public funds and the approval thereof.

1 SECTION 3. The following words and phrases, as used in this
2 act, shall, unless the context otherwise requires, have the fol-
3 lowing meanings:

4 “Project,” the acquisition, development, construction, expan-
5 sion, rehabilitation, improvement, furnishing, equipping, or fin-
6 ishing, or a combination of the foregoing, or operation,
7 promotion, and maintenance, of a museum and cultural center in
8 Springfield containing twelve thousand square feet of space for
9 exhibition, display, conference rooms and related furnishings, fur-
10 niture, machinery, equipment, facilities, approaches, driveways,
11 parking facilities, which shall not exceed two hundred passenger
12 automobile spaces, roadways, public transportation, planting and
13 landscaping, the acquisition of land or other property, or rights,
14 easements, and interests acquired for or in respect of any such
15 land or property, the demolition or removal of any buildings or
16 structures on land so acquired or in or with respect to which inter-
17 ests are so acquired and site preparation.

18 “Mason Square,” so-called, in area within the city of Spring-
19 field shall be the site for locating the center.

20 “Operator,” the person, corporation, authority, company, group
21 or entity, whether private or public, entering into contract with the
22 Commonwealth to manage, operate and maintain the new center
23 as authorized and directed in this act.

1 SECTION 4. Within ninety days of the effective date of this
2 act, the Department of Capital Planning and Operations, here-
3 inafter called the “commissioner,” shall conduct or contract for
4 due diligence studies, and prepare a report and preliminary speci-
5 fications which shall include the following:

6 (a) Preliminary specifications for a museum and cultural center
7 suitable for small permanent displays, scale conferences, art and
8 photographic exhibits, library, and a theatre to accommodate small
9 audiences to be built in the Mason Square Area of Springfield.

10 The preliminary specifications shall be developed and prepared
11 in consultation with the African-American Museum and Cultural
12 Center of Western Massachusetts and the city of Springfield, shall
13 include the design, physical, and operating characteristics which
14 the facility shall contain, a precise estimate of the costs of con-
15 struction, and such other details or criteria relative to the construc-
16 tion of a building for use as a museum and cultural center.

17 (b) Certified appraisals of land to be acquired and assembled
18 for the project, including relocation of existing structures and
19 businesses.

20 (c) Studies of area wide traffic impact, transit requirements,
21 necessary or desirable traffic changes for pedestrian and vehicular
22 access, improvements for pedestrian safety, the accommodation of
23 on-site parking not to exceed two hundred parking spaces and
24 costs of all of the above; provided, however, that such studies
25 may, at the direction of the Commissioner, in consultation with the
26 city of Springfield.

27 (d) Establish criteria, requirements, duties and financial respon-
28 sibilities of an operator to operate and maintain the center con-
29 structed pursuant to this act.